



Policy / Procedure Information (Policy no CS021)	
Subject	Safe Sharps and Blood Borne Virus Policy (This policy is subject to periodic review and will be amended according to service development needs)
Applicable to	This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors who work for or provide care on behalf of Nottinghamshire Hospice.
Date issued	Aug 2021
Next review date	March 2026
Lead responsible for Policy	Director of Care
Policy Reviewed by	Infection Prevention and Control Team Care Service Team
Notified to	Quality and Safety Group
Authorised by	Board of Trustees
Links to other Policies	Infection Prevention and Control Policy
Summary	This document aims to provide a clear understanding of Nottinghamshire Hospices Infection Control Policy.
Target Audience	The policy aimed at all staff, volunteers and contractors who work for or provide care on behalf of Nottinghamshire Hospice.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: If the review date of this policy or procedure has expired staff should seek advice from their clinical lead or manager regarding the appropriate action to be taken.

Staff should refer to the website folder on the N universal drive for the most up to date information.

Sharing Disclaimer: This Policy/Procedure has been produced by Nottingham CityCare Partnership (CityCare) for use within its own organisation and has been adapted by Nottinghamshire Hospice following review to ensure its applicability CityCare is willing to share the document with other organisations as long as it is credited for its work in producing the document and that the document is changed to ensure it is fit for purpose for the adopting organisation.

No liability will be accepted as a result of any other organisation or person therein suffering any harm or loss as a result of using this document as a template for their own purposes.

Contents

		Page
1	Introduction	3
2	Evidence Base	3
3	Purpose	3
4	Scope	3
5	Definitions	4
6	Responsibilities	4
7	Risk Management (Indications and Contra-Indications/ Hazards)	5
8	The Use of Sharps	5
9	Sharps Bin Requirements	6
10	Disposal of Sharps Bins	6
11	Bites, Scratches and Body Fluids	7
12	Actions to be Taken Following Needlestick/Sharps injury, Human Bite/Scratch or Spill of Body Fluids	7
13	Education/Training Programme	8
14	Interaction with Other Policies and Procedures	9
15	Equality & Diversity Statement	9
16	Monitoring & Review (of this policy)	9
17	Further Guidance	9
18	References	10
19	Equality Impact Assessment Form (Short)	10
20	Appendices	11

1. Introduction

This policy has been produced to address the safe use and disposal of sharps devices and to reduce the associated risks.

Sharps injuries occur following a cut or puncture wound to the skin, most often from a needle or other medical sharp such as a scalpel. The risk of acquiring blood borne infections is greatest with inoculation injuries, however, there are also potential risks associated with splashing of blood onto mucous membranes or damaged skin (RCN 2010). Sharps injuries are a well-known risk to workers in healthcare and for those who receive them they can cause anxiety and distress and may result in exposure to blood borne viruses (BBVs) such as Human Immuno deficiency Virus HIV or hepatitis B or C (NHS Employers 2015). This policy provides information about what to do in the event of a needlestick/sharps injury, human bite, scratch or splash of bodily fluid to the eyes or mouth. The policy will ensure all staff working within the organisation are aware of their responsibilities. when handling sharps.

The Health and Social Care Act (2008) recommends that all organisations have their own detailed policy on the safe handling and disposal of sharps and on the prevention of occupational exposure to blood borne viruses. In addition to this the European Sharps Directive (HSE, 2013) builds on existing laws/regulations such as the Health and Safety at work Act (1974) and provides specific detail on the legal requirements that must be fulfilled by all health care employers and their contractors. The directive states that staff should avoid the use of sharps where reasonably practicable to do so. Where the use of a sharp is unavoidable staff must have access to 'Safer Sharps' which incorporate features or mechanisms to prevent or minimise the risk of accidental injury e.g. needle guards.

However devices must not be changed if the safer device is risk assessed as less reliable, more likely to compromise patient care or if the staff member does not retain appropriate control over the procedure involving the use of the sharp.

2. Evidence Base

This policy has been developed following best practice and information sourced in the reference list.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that staff within Nottinghamshire Hospice have sufficient information to safely and correctly handle sharps devices minimising the risk of injury to themselves and their patients and to ensure procedures are in place to prevent exposure to blood borne viruses and prompt appropriate action is taken in the event of an incident.

4. Scope

This policy is for the use of all staff employed by Nottinghamshire Hospice whose role necessitates the use of sharps or who may be exposed to bodily fluids.

5. Definitions

- **Blood born or occupational exposure** – splashing of blood or body fluid onto the skin or mucous membranes.
- **Safer sharp** – Medical sharp that incorporates features or mechanisms to prevent or minimise the risk of accidental injury e.g. shields, covers, retractable needles and blades.
- **Sharps injury** – an injury that can be caused by any needle, scalpel, or other article that could cause wounds or punctures to personnel handling them.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that there are arrangements in place within the Organisation to support infection prevention and control, in particular the necessary policies and training to reduce the risk of infections being transmitted.

6.2 Executive Team are responsible for ensuring that staff have the necessary training and competence to use sharps safely and dispose of them appropriately and that there are systems in place for staff to access Occupational Health.

6.3 Occupational Health has a responsibility to assess all new starters via a health questionnaire to identify any risks to the individual and to ensure vaccination against blood borne viruses is complete. They will ensure any staff who sustain a sharps injury have the necessary counselling and advice to manage the incident in accordance with this policy.

6.4 The Infection Prevention and Control Team at CityCare are responsible for updating this policy every five years or more regularly if required. Any organisational wide changes that are required to ensure the safe handling and disposal of sharps will also be implemented.

The Infection Prevention and Control Team will provide sharps information at staff induction and will provide two yearly mandatory infection prevention and control training which covers safe sharps management and advise staff on a day to day basis with any queries relating to sharps handling or disposal, or the undertaking of exposure prone procedures.

6.5 Nottinghamshire Hospice Staff: Infection prevention and control is everyone's business. All staff are responsible for taking reasonable care of themselves, service users and any other people affected by their acts or omissions in accordance with Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Hospice staff are also responsible for:

- Filling out an occupational health questionnaire prior joining the Organisation to ensure they have had the necessary vaccinations and immunisations appropriate to their role.
- Assessing the risks of blood and body fluid splashes and contamination and instigating the correct infection prevention and control principles to prevent exposure. (See Hospice Personal Protective Equipment Policy).
- Ensuring sharps bins are assembled and disposed of safely according to the Nottinghamshire Hospice Waste Policy.
- Ensuring they are up to date with mandatory infection prevention and control training. Training is 3 yearly and aims to be service specific.

- Reporting any incidents or near misses to their line manager in relation to sharps and blood and body fluid contamination completing a Datix Incident form (See the Incident Reporting and Learning Policy and Procedures).
- Managing a sharps injury in accordance with this policy.

Visitors, agency staff and external contractors are expected to comply with reasonable instructions given by staff who are seeking to protect them from risk of exposure to BBVs.

7. Risk Management (Indications and Contra-Indications/ Hazards)

Blood and body fluids are classed as potential substances hazardous to health, as they have the ability to transfer pathogenic micro-organisms which can result in possible infection or disease (Health and Safety Executive, HSE, 2012). The European Sharps directive (2013) states that the unnecessary use of sharps should be avoided and where ever possible needle free equipment should be used. Where it is necessary for a needle to be used those that incorporate safety devices must be considered ensuring needles are never resheathed. The use of 'safer sharps' e.g. needle shields, does not remove all of the risks, as injuries often occur during procedures before a needle shield is activated. Staff should ensure that all stages of the procedure are safe and remember that the disposal of the sharp is the responsibility of the user and therefore must NOT be handed to anyone else for disposal.

Incident reporting has highlighted that occasionally sharps are incorrectly disposed of. It is important that if a sharp is found in the environment that it is handled in a safe manner. Grab sticks and anti-needle/Kevlar gloves are available at the Hospice site. If this equipment cannot be located then this must be raised with the Hospice Manager.

8. The Use of Sharps

Sharps must only be used when there is no other alternative available.

All sharps must be used only for their intended, licensed purpose.

Where sharps are deemed necessary e.g. needles for the administration of injections, safety needles should be used where possible.

Used syringes / cartridges and needles must not be resheathed, bent or broken, prior to disposal.

Needles and syringes should be disposed of as a single unit and not be disassembled by hand prior to disposal.

Sharps must be disposed of at the point of use into a designated sharps bin, avoiding contact with the contaminated part.

Care should be taken when carrying sharps bins within vehicles. Sharps bins should be secured upright and the temporary closure mechanism must always be in place.

Ampsnap devices should be used when breaking glass ampoules to prevent any injuries to hands (see appendix 1).

9. Sharps Bin Requirements

Sharps bins must be labelled at point of first use to identify their origin or other site details, including date assembled/date closed.

Sharps bins should be available at the point of care to minimise the risk of injury to patients, visitors and health care workers.

Sharps bins must be assembled correctly in accordance with manufacturers' instructions.

The capacity of the sharps bin must be appropriate for their intended use and correct colour coding used (please refer to the Waste Management Policy).

When not in use, the sharps bin must be left with the lid in the temporary closed position and should be situated in a location that minimises the risk of injury to patients, visitors and health care workers e.g. away from children and other vulnerable members of the population. This is particularly important for staff undertaking domiciliary visits that may have a sharps bin situated within their clinical bag. Staff must ensure that Sharps bins are secured when transporting in vehicles.

10. Disposal of Sharps Bins

Sharps bins must be closed securely according to the manufacturer's instructions when they are 75% full and contents must not exceed the black fill line.

Sharps bins must be checked to ensure that they are labelled with their point of origin when assembled and locked securely when ready for disposal. The date of closure and signature must be recorded on the label.

Sharps bins should be tagged using the black identification tag supplied by the waste company when being removed by the domestic staff / general assistant, prior to being placed in the hazardous waste bin in the waste compound.

Prior to disposal, sharps bins must be stored safely in a secure area inaccessible to the general public.

Sharps bins must NOT be placed into a clinical waste bag prior to disposal.

Blood contamination on the outside of a sharps bin requires disinfection with 10,000 parts per million of chlorine.

Only carry the sharps bin by the handle, which is a requirement of BS7320 (1990), and do NOT carry it close to the body.

Sharps bins should be disposed of after 3 months even if the fill line has not been reached as per NICE guidance. If sharps in sharps bins do not reach the fill line within this time then consideration needs to be given to using a smaller sharps bin.

11. Bites/Scratches and Body Fluids

Staff can be at risk of exposure to blood borne viruses from bites, scratches and bodily fluids where their skin is broken.

Before undertaking any care activity/procedure a risk assessment is needed to assess if there are any potential risks of exposure to the skin or mucous membranes from blood or body fluids. Blood is the most high-risk body fluid but the same precautions should be followed when handling other body fluids.

Precautions need to be taken if it is identified there may be a risk of exposure to splashes of body fluids to the eyes or mouth. These precautions involve the use of appropriate personal protective equipment; this may involve face masks, eye protection, gloves and aprons, dependant on the risks identified. Please refer to the Nottinghamshire Hospice Use and Correct Disposal of Personal Protective Equipment Policy.

Please contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team for advice prior to any procedure being undertaken where you are unsure of the outcome of the risk assessment. Tel: 0115 8834902

12. Actions to be taken following needlestick/ sharps injuries, human bite / scratch or splash of body fluids to the eyes or mouth.

Step One First Aid:

- Encourage the wound to bleed. DO NOT suck.
- Wash with soap and water.
- Dry and apply waterproof dressing.
- Use water to irrigate following a body fluid splash to the eyes or mouth.

Step Two Assess Infection Risk:

- Unused/clean sharp - No risk of infection.
- Complete Datix incident form. (If in doubt, seek further advice)
- Used/dirty sharp or human bite/scratch or body fluid splash to eyes or mouth;

source known or unknown - seek professional advice:

Monday – Friday 09.00 – 17.00 contact Occupational Health:

COPE

The First Floor
Arnold Business Centre
Brookfield Gardens
Arnold
Nottingham NG5 7ER

0115 9259222

COPE will assess if any blood tests are required.

Out of Hours: Seek immediate telephone advice from the local hospital Emergency Department and contact the COPE Occupational Health department the next working day to inform them of the incident.

Following an incident where the healthcare worker has received an injury, the source patient, if known, needs to be informed that the incident will be reported and that their G.P may contact them to request blood test.

Step Three

Report incident to line manager or senior staff member.

Complete incident form.

If employed by another organisation working within the City of Nottingham the staff member should inform their manager and notify their organisation through their own internal incident reporting mechanisms.

13. Education / Training Programme

The safe handling and disposal of sharps and prevention of exposure to blood borne viruses is included in the training sessions offered by the Nottingham CityCare Partnership Infection Prevention and Control Team.

14. Interaction with Other Policies, Procedure and Regulations

Nottinghamshire Hospice Personal Protective Equipment Policy for Infection Prevention and Control.

Nottinghamshire Hospice Waste Management Policy.

Nottinghamshire Hospice Incident Reporting and Learning Policy and Procedure.

Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations (Health and Safety Executive 2013). Guidance for employers and employees

National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) (2012) Healthcare-associated infections: prevention and control in primary and community care. Clinical guideline [CG139].

15. Equality & Diversity Statement

Less favourable treatment of anyone on the grounds of their age, disability, gender, marital status, being pregnant or on maternity leave, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, responsibility for dependents, trade union or political activities, or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified will not be tolerated. Positive action may be taken to improve the diversity of our workforce to reflect the city's population and to encourage people from protected groups to participate where their level of participation is disproportionately low. (Equality & Diversity Policy)

16. Monitoring and Review - (of this policy)

Sharps related incidents are monitored at the Incident Review Meetings and Quality and Safety Group as part of regular exception reporting of incidents.

This Policy will be reviewed by the Infection Prevention and Control Team every five years or more frequently where changes are required.

17. Further Guidance

If you have any concerns or issues with the contents of this policy or have difficulty understanding how this policy relates to you and/or your role, please contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team 0115 8834902

Further information can be found at

<http://www.patient.co.uk/support/Needlestickforum.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/resources.htm>

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/case-studies-and-resources/2015/12/hswpg-sharps-guidance>

18. References

British Standards Institute. Specification for Sharps Containers. BS 7320. British Standards Institution, London, 1990.

Council Directive 2010/32/EU (2010) implementing framework agreement on prevention from sharps injuries in the hospital and health care sector.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Department of Health (2013). Health Technical Memorandum 07 – 01 Safe Management of Healthcare Waste. London

Health and Safety Executive (2012) – COSHH – A brief guide to the regulations.

Health and Safety Executive (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013

Health and Social Care Act (2008) Code of Practice for Health and Adult Social Care on the Prevention and Control of Infection and Related Guidance

Nottinghamshire Hospicethe Use and Safe Disposal of Personal Protective Equipment Policy, 2011.

Nottinghamshire Hospice reporting of incidents and Accidents policy.

Royal College of Nursing Guidance to support the implementation of The Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare Regulations) 2013

NHS Employers. Managing the Risk of Sharps Injuries (2015) The NHS Staff Council. Working in Partnership. Health Safety and Well Being Partnership Group.

19. Equality Impact Assessment Form (Short)

		YES/NO	COMMENT
1.	Does the policy affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		
	Age	No	
	Disability – learning disabilities, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems	No	
	Gender Reassignment	No	

	Marriage/Civil Partnership	No	
	Pregnancy/Maternity	No	
	Race	No	
	Religion or Belief	No	
	Sex	No	
	Sexual Orientation	No	
2.	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	
3.	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	N/A	
4.	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	No	
5.	If so can the impact be avoided?	N/A	
6.	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy without the impact?	N/A	
7.	How can the impact be reduced by taking different action?	N/A	

If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this procedural document, please refer it to the sponsoring director; together with any suggestions as to the action required to avoid/reduce this impact

Appendix 1

How to Use the Glass Ampoule Snapper



This end over the vial

When using the amp snap put the end shown in the picture over the vial and break off the end of the glass vial. Put the amp snap and the end of the glass vial into the sharps bin as these are single use disposable devices. This will minimize the risk of sharps injury to the clinician. The ampoule snappers are available through the Supplies Catalogue FVD029